

STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE

97 Kenmare Street. New York. NY. 10012. U.S.A.
tel.212.431.5795 fax.212.431.5755
e-mail. info@storefrontnews.org

CONTACT: Sarah Herda
(212)431-5795

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hell's Kitchen South: Developing Strategies

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How does New York city come to be the way it is? What role should citizens have in shaping the city the live in? While different people answer these questions in diverse and often conflicting ways, the exhibition **Hell's Kitchen Developing Strategies** explores new and collaborative ways in which these questions could be answered by developers, community groups, public agencies, designers, planners and neighborhood residents.

The exhibit will highlight a continuing process centering on the neighborhood between 34th and 42nd Streets, between 8th Avenue and the Hudson River. Building on a conference held at the Jacob Javitz Convention Center last June that brought together local business people, residents, institutional leaders, and design professionals in dialog about the future of this dynamic neighborhood. Building on issues raised in the conference, 13 design teams went to work producing proposals for the neighborhood's future development.


The exhibition will feature these proposals along with documentation of the overall process into which they fit, educational material about the management of the city's built environment (*What is zoning? How is planning usually done?*), a variety of contextual material about the neighborhood, and stories from other neighborhoods engaged in similar processes. The exhibition is intended for a wide audience interested in urban issues: architects, planners, students, community activists, government officials, and citizens.

Hell's Kitchen South: Developing Strategies explores new ways of making New York City work. It points the way towards new forms of collaboration and new types of negotiation. It is the first step in developing the strategies that will allow New York City to continue its tradition of intense and epoch-shaping development into the 21st century.

Gallery hours: Wednesday—Saturday, 12–6 p.m.
Address: 97 Kenmare Street (Between Mulberry & Lafayette)
Subway: 6/Spring Street, NR /Prince Street, BDFQ/ Broadway/Lafayette
Admission: Free
For more information call: (212) 431-5795

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Founded in 1982, Storefront for Art and Architecture is a nonprofit organization committed to presenting and communicating innovative positions in art, architecture and design through provocative and interdisciplinary public programs.



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Hell's Kitchen South: Developing Strategies is a multi-disciplinary project that re-connects urban design and planning to the discussions of land use, economic development and public health that shape the city and its neighborhoods. Instead of the ~~AD~~ Darwinian model of competing interests which typically results in inequitable, imperious or mediocre urban intervention, *Developing Strategies* offers a collaborative model where a variety of actors envision how to creatively manage development in a neighborhood facing increased market pressure: ~~Hell's Kitchen South, where regional infrastructures, urban institutions and daily patterns of inhabitation overlap in unimaginable ways.~~

Hell's Kitchen South is not pretty. ~~To many eyes,~~ it presents a fragmented image of roads, overpasses, spaces and buildings that weave in and out of the ~~city's~~ grid. ~~None of the pieces seem to connect with one another.~~ Bordered on three sides by the Port Authority Bus Terminal, the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center and the sunken railyards of Penn Central and pinned at the core by the Lincoln Tunnel, the neighborhood has a ~~mottled~~ texture and sensibility. Packed between these massive regional institutions lies ~~a bewildering~~ ^{an} array of lofts, apartments, tenements, small offices and manufacturers, stores, restaurants, parking lots, taxi repair shops, gas stations and ~~many~~ empty lots. ^{out of contextual} **[**This heterogeneous landscape does not, however, need to be "fixed" in the traditional sense. It does not need to be cleaned-up, filled-in, covered-over or replaced. The people who live and work in Hell's Kitchen South -- who initiated this entire project -- not only like its other-worldly quality, they want more of it. **]**

^{Residual Spaces} Hell's Kitchen South is a veritable museum of massive interventions that have benefited the larger metropolis at local expense: the Tunnel, opened in 1936 and expanded in 1954, the Port Authority, opened in 1950 and expanded in 1963 and 1981 and the Javits Center, opened in 1984 and currently contemplating expansion. **[**Each of these institutions acts like a huge machine that sends their human cargo under, around, over or through the neighborhood yet never pausing within it. ^{IN} ~~Add~~ the role the neighborhood plays as parking lot and service facility for midtown, ~~and its function becomes emphatically clear.~~ ^{as one of} The neighborhood ~~is the~~ among the most important switching points in Manhattan.

[These regional urban institutions were thrown at Hell's Kitchen South without regard for supporting local needs or infrastructure and they have long since surpassed their ~~carrying capacities.~~ **]** Twenty-five million vehicles per year use the Lincoln Tunnel and its ~~jumble of~~ access routes that burrow through the neighborhood. An increase of 10% is expected this year. ~~In fact,~~ no one quite knows how the access routes to the Tunnel are managed. During off-hours, the city's famous double-decker tour buses and the daily flood of Port Authority commuter buses idle their engines at tiny sites scattered throughout the neighborhood. ~~Breathe much?~~ The Javits Center ^{is} ~~was~~ sited at 34th Street because it appeared that there was no neighborhood to argue against it. ~~Worse,~~ it remains unconnected to any transportation or support services and, ~~unfortunately for the neighborhood,~~ ^{local, neighborhood} it cuts off access to the river **[**(Ironically, the powerful Clinton Special District to the north was proposed, in part, as compensation for a convention center Clinton never had to live with!) **]** ~~And now the Javits wants to expand!~~

~~The result of these colossal urban devices, the odd buildings, different types of housing, locally owned shops and juxtaposed left-over spaces that make up Hell's Kitchen South is that it has none of the genteel allure of other Manhattan neighborhoods, an allure that has made them targets for gentrification. Neither does the community have a predominant building type uniquely suited to one kind of new use. In other words, the very factors that make the area seem so chaotic and enigmatic are the same features that might enable the residents and businesses here to invent a different kind of urban future.~~

Planning Anyone? As midtown development approaches ~~the signs are everywhere~~ we ask how this community can both ~~embrace and control the process of inevitable change. Hell's Kitchen South does not intend to play the usual game.~~ ^{HK} This neighborhood does not want to be the gameboard upon which private and public interests compete through policy and politics to meet their separate goals. Not only will this process destroy their community but it will most likely do so with the usual mediocre outcome: the social results will be dissatisfying, the spaces boring and the solutions conservative, time consuming and costly. Worse, the neighborhood might once again be subject to the grandiose visions of yet another megastructural intervention. But don't jump to the conclusion that Hell's Kitchen South is against development.

Who, What, When, Where, Why, How. *Developing Strategies* builds upon work initiated five years ago by the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association (HKNA): a group of residents who sought to take control over what might or might not happen in their community. Over the years, HKNA organized and established a good working relationship with the Port Authority and the Javits Center -- the two largest institutions and land owners in their area. In 1998, HKNA approached the Design Trust for Public Space (DTPS), a non-profit organization which funds and manages studies of public space and architecture in New York City. Together they decided to organize a conference aimed at involving the Hell's Kitchen South community in envisioning and planning for the future of their neighborhood.

HKNA and DTPS approached Design + Urbanism (D+U), an urban design firm, to help organize and program the Conference. In addition, D+U proposed a longer-term Design Study that would explore specific ways that Hell's Kitchen South might change. The Conference and Workshop, which took place June 11 and 12 at the Javits Center, provided an interactive setting where residents, urban planners, designers, developers, public health specialists and public officials worked together to develop planning and design ideas for the community. The Conference provided an abundance of material to inform further study and served as a real-time programming event for the design professionals as they proceeded with the Design Studies.

The Design Teams, invited by D+U, HKNA and DTPS based on their range of experience and commitment to community-based work, were given a mandate to develop the design implications of specific issues raised at the conference. Teams were encouraged to think at all scales and to focus on both long term and short term possibilities. Their goal was to provide concrete, viable and creative recommendations for the neighborhood that could help inform their discussions with the city and private developers.

And once the floodgates open, new questions and ideas swell.

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What better place for a mixed-use district, a district of hybrid buildings and programs where trucks -- not to mention pushcarts and horses -- are already a common sight? Why not provide for light industrial spaces and incubators for new industry that need to be near the action of midtown? How can technology-driven development mesh with existing industries such as printing, fashion and design which are struggling to survive increasing market pressure? Why not connect the Javits with the additional services it needs -- literally attached like a new skin? Why not design a building that houses buses on weekdays and markets on weekends? Is it possible to provide new forms of live-work space for the new family types, new work types and new living situations -- all of which are already abundant in Hell's Kitchen South -- that require more flexible urban and architectural responses? Is it possible to build a variety of housing types in a neighborhood rather than overwhelm it with one type?

The views and vistas created by the odd constructions of Port Authority, the Lincoln Tunnel and the Javits Center form a unique landscape that is as historic and valuable as any national park. Rather than filling up these unique bumps, gaps and breaks, can they accommodate new types of productive open space? A transportation park? Or perhaps a flea market or market for small, start-up businesses not yet able to afford regular overhead? Why not connect through the Javits Center to the new Hudson River Park? Perhaps otherwise unusable rights-of-way can be used for green filters, bike trails and just places to sit?

Planning Everyone! *Developing Strategies* is based on a design process which embraces the complexity that the neighborhood wants to nurture. The intricacy and variety of Hell's Kitchen South makes it vital for any plan to be open-ended rather than prescriptive; it demands that plans be adaptable and buildings and uses be flexible. Everything, ~~it seems~~, should be hybrid.

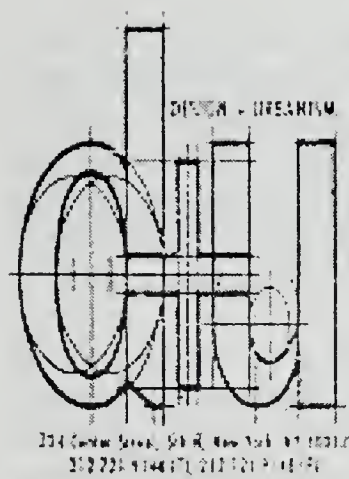
~~The solution offered by~~ *Developing Strategies* is not a single plan with an overriding formal vision but instead is a different way of perceiving the problem of urban design and planning. ~~Driving a wedge between the unfettered workings of the market and an untenable, anti-growth NIMBY-ism,~~ *Developing Strategies* proposes that development can benefit more by doing and learning more. ~~Collaboration~~ of experts and professionals from many disciplines with the residents, institutions and business-owners of the neighborhood has produced a set of programs and ideas that offer ~~far~~ more potential than anything any one group or designer could come up with. The process of discussion, debate and exploration is expansive, opening new possibilities rather than restricting them. It is responsive and better equipped to accommodate existing site relationships.

Developing Strategies presents first steps toward more efficient, responsive and complex strategies for change: *design strategies* driven by innovative programs and new forms; *management strategies* which adapt and transform the complex network of uses, infrastructures and building types which shape the urban landscape; *implementation strategies* which embrace incremental change; and *participatory strategies* which accept the array of local and regional voices, ~~actors and players~~ as having legitimate interests ~~and roles~~ in shaping the city.

Hell's Kitchen South: Developing Strategies is a collaborative enterprise that has engaged many different kinds of actors to envision how one neighborhood might change. But this exhibit is not just an documentation about one community's attempt to claim its future, nor is it just a collection of viable design ideas. *Developing Strategies* is also an opportunity to clarify a planning and design process that can, with the proper care and feeding, come to your neighborhood.

What Next? In collaboration with HKNA, DTPS and Community Board 4, D+U will host a symposium at the Javits Center on December 16 to discuss the project and to present their recommendations based on the proposals of the design teams. The symposium will examine how the planning and design process has worked and will explore what HKNA's next steps might be. By the end of this year, D+U will submit a final report to HKNA that synthesizes the design and planning ideas of all the participants and offers a series of growth and development scenarios. It will not be a master plan or a unitary vision. It will be a flexible system offering options for neighborhood improvement and development. It will be a tool that helps Hell's Kitchen South to embrace change without being overwhelmed by it.

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Design Studies

The Design Team submissions vary greatly. They range from small to vastly scaled proposals. Some teams offer recommendations that can be implemented immediately while others offer long-term solutions. Some proposals fit with existing zoning and land-use patterns while others require that such rules be altered. In many cases, teams make similar proposals while in other cases, the recommendations conflict -- one team places low-rise buildings where another locates high rises, for example. The key point of the variety of ideas provided by the teams is that the synthetic report will not be a single plan but instead will provide a flexible set of options with which the community can work over time.

Many schemes address common issues: pedestrian movement systems, environmental concerns, possible new uses given the proximity to midtown and transportation. In addition, many schemes utilize phased and partial implementation of recommendations.

Below are summaries of the design team submissions:

Studio A/B:

Studio A/B asks that we look at the existing conditions of the neighborhood with different eyes. They propose to re-frame our perception and experience of the neighborhood by re-using the viaducts, alleys, even roof-tops and other underutilized elements as spaces for local commerce, small parks and pedestrian-friendly spaces. This project is both visionary and realizable; it enables the phased introduction of a variety of small-scale elements that can benefit all users of the neighborhood.

Brooklyn Architects Collective

The BAC offers three recommendations that are compelling for their value in discussions with the Javits Center. The first is to line the front of the Center with new retail space. Except for the entry to the Javits, the building is set far back from the street and has no need for frontage. New commercial space along 11th Avenue -- for convention or non-convention uses -- can be part of a larger development package of the area. Second, the BAC proposes a new access bridge through the Javits to gain 24-hour community access to the soon-to-be built Pier 76. Third, the BAC proposes to fill developable sites in the neighborhood with a new form of building that is half Javits convention activity and half community facility. The "scattered Javits" idea provides smaller-scale event space that, when not in use, can revert to community functions such as auditorium, classrooms, gymnasias. This recommendation also raises the possibility that the current Javits facilities might be offered for community uses during non-convention periods. Finally, a 39th Street public pedestrian corridor is recommended. This concept reappears in a number of projects.

Neo-Politan Plan: Richard Sommer and Laura Miller

The Neo-Politan Plan has four components. The first and most profound element is to locate an expanded Javits Center on the rail yard site (the IFCCA site) and to demolish the existing Center. The land made available from this relocation is proposed as a mixed-use and mixed-scale district amplifying the complex array of uses that already exists in the area. The district would include housing, live-work spaces and office spaces. Finally, the team proposes a mid-block system of pedestrian walkways.

While this scheme offers a visionary re-assertion of a new housing type by removing the Javits, it also raises the possibility of building a new Convention Center and keeping the existing Center for community uses. A mixed-use building type could be inserted into the existing open sites.

MP Studio

MP Studio offers three main proposals: a nature loop, a re-zoning plan and a river connector. Connecting odd slices of land near the Tunnel, rail cuts and easements east of the Javits and a greened 39th Street, MP Studio proposes a continuous weave parkland through the neighborhood. The zoning plan connects 34th to 42nd Street by a commercially re-zoned 11th Avenue. The River connector links the green loop to the Hudson Park and the Piers. MP Studio also recommends connecting the #7 train from 42nd Street to a light rail system from the south.

MP Studio seeks to invigorate the neighborhood by bringing new and expanded uses to its perimeter while "greening" the core areas and keeping them low-scale and pedestrian-friendly.

InLine Studio

InLine Studio proposes several new building types as well as new forms of open space, both of which use the air space above and below the many ramps and viaducts that make up the neighborhood. Among the buildings is a new communications-industry building and a new type of parking structure. In addition, they suggest a huge park, with varied programming, raised over the ramps. One of the more interesting zoning proposals is the creation of parks in the upper stories of large buildings.

The work of InLine Studio asks that we provide mixed-uses and scales in a manner that the Port Authority Building -- with its ramps, parking and multi-level interior -- already does. They ask that we seek more and better locations for green spaces and recreational spaces as the city becomes more and more densely built. Developing a system of elevated public spaces along 39th street from the Port Authority garage to 11th Avenue is one scenario.

Brian McGrath

Brian McGrath examines the road, ramp and traffic infrastructure of the Lincoln Tunnel. His proposal envisions a reduction of auto use of the Tunnel that some traffic experts have said must happen over the next few decades to reduce congestion and pollution. With reduced traffic at the tunnel, McGrath proposes that the access routes be simplified and reduced to yield new buildable parcels for housing, open space and air-filtering greenery.

This project raises several key issues. It points out the need for an independent evaluation of the use and regulation of tunnel access. It also points out the need for a city-wide comparison of how tunnels and bridges affect their neighborhoods and how pollution, congestion and public health are remedied.

"Life in Hell"

This team, composed entirely of residents and professionals who live in the neighborhood, begins with the simple premise that to become a viable community with a voice, the neighborhood needs more residents. To that end they propose several new locations for buildings as well as areas to be preserved. Finding, as many have, that the perimeter of the Javits Center has no need for exterior exposure, "Life in Hell" lines the perimeter of the building with single-loaded, mid-rise residential buildings. With additional new housing to the east of 12th Avenue, the scale of the street shifts from highway to a more traditional New York-type avenue. "Life in Hell" proposes a new park "lung" over ramps leading to the Lincoln Tunnel which will connect to a new 39th Street pedestrian zone, also green, that connects the river to the community. In addition, mixed-use low and medium rise buildings near 9th Avenue would enhance its importance as the heart of the community.

This scheme points out that the Javits Center need not have exterior exposure and that there is much land available for other programs at its edges. Housing is the suggested use but hotels or other commercial uses are also possible. In addition, "Life in Hell" reminds us of the vital role played by 9th Avenue in the economic and cultural life of the neighborhood.

Briggs/Knowles Studio

Briggs/Knowles works at the scale of a single building to address the neighborhood need for community and social facilities. They propose a community building located over the road viaducts on Dyer Avenue with school, classrooms and recreational spaces. In addition, the building provides a new pedestrian route through the area and houses a landscaped park that also serves as an air filtering system. The building takes advantage of available space between and over the viaducts, provides much needed community-use spaces and addresses the key environmental issue of pollution; all are issues that can be addressed on other sites in the neighborhood.

Todd MacDonald

MacDonald zeroes in on the issue of Javits Center expansion. There is a widely shared sense that the Center is no longer big enough for contemporary conventions. MacDonald considers expansion options in all four directions. North and west are dismissed out of hand; the former as no longer viable because of the Silverstein development at 41st Street and because the community vehemently opposes any further blocking of their river access; the latter because going into the river raises too many questions with respect to the environment, the highway and Hudson River park. Options to the south and east are more viable. To the south, the rail yard site is clearly large enough but decking is extremely expensive; expansion to the east could connect above or below grade (since a large rail cut already exists below) and would provide block-sized halls for convention use. This latter option has the benefit of not overwhelming the scale of the neighborhood.

While not providing for the single large clear span spaces convention center experts seek, MacDonald's preference for an eastward expansion offers a more city-friendly, neighborhood-scaled option for the Javits Center. It brings the scale of the Center more in line with the surrounding blocks and enables other uses for the community.

Benites and Fiorez

Benites and Fiorez offer four proposals for the neighborhood. They zone the core area from 9th to 11th Avenues for low and medium-scale construction and allow taller buildings at 34th and 42nd Streets. Within the lower-scaled core area, they propose infill mixed-use buildings that match the character of the context. These two zoning ideas contrast with the typical New York City sizing of tall avenues and low mid-blocks. The difference in strategies -- from block to neighborhood-scaled regulations -- enhances the sense that blocks within a

neighborhood are related rather than cut off from each other. Benites and Florez also propose a new kind of hybrid building to account for the drastically different uses of many neighborhood streets on weekdays and on weekends. They select 39th Street, where the weekend/weekday contrast is greatest, as a site for alternating pedestrian use and bus storage. Finally, 39th Street connects to a larger green loop that weaves through rail cuts, easements and other odd sites throughout the neighborhood.

David Rockwood with Claudia Diaz and Petra Kemp

This project metaphorically critiques the “cleaner” or marketable Hell's Kitchen. The team continues the marginalized character the neighborhood has historically experienced. Industrial, mixed-use and pleasure related uses are given preference over the Central Business uses.

UN Studio: van Berkel and Bos

This team is one of the five finalists in the IFCCA competition for the rail yard site. Their proposal for that site is for a large mixed-use center enabling removal of the Javits Center. In this proposal for Other Urbanisms, they recommend a neighborhood of mixed-use and mixed-scale building to include housing and retail. In addition, they provide for community facilities and bus and auto parking.

Jocelyne Chait

Planner Jocelyne Chait contributes a report on the viability and feasibility of developing a 197a plan for Hell's Kitchen South. 197a plans are community-initiated documents that set out the zoning, use or policy guidelines the community would like to implement. After review and approval by city agencies, the community adopts the plan to use in review of all architectural urban interventions in the designated area. Although the 197a plan does not have regulatory or enforcement power, it is an important advisory document and reference tool for city agencies, planners, community organizations and private developers.

Tom Lunke

Planner Tom Lunke has been active in recent discussions about the role and relocation of manufacturers in New York City. He points out that the city should not rely on service sector employment but instead needs a diversity of uses to remain a vibrant place to live and work. Lunke's proposal is based on the idea that a variety of light and mixed manufacturing should be encouraged. He recommends zoning, use, location, and transportation guidelines to better house these new industries in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood while also maintaining the scale and character that makes it unique.

